



British
Waterways

AN ILLUSTRATED MAP OF FRADLEY JUNCTION

ON THE COVENTRY AND TRENT & MERSEY CANALS

Where canals, boats and people meet



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Kingfisher Holiday Park

One of the busiest junctions on the canals

Fradley Junction is famous among boaters because it's one of the busiest places on the waterways.

It's also a favourite place for visitors who enjoy watching boats negotiating the Junction and the locks or anglers patiently fishing from the towpath. And there's plenty to do. You can explore Fradley Pool with its bird hide, try your hand at pond dipping, buy a

day ticket to fish Fradley Pool or stroll along the towpath to the nearby villages. You can follow four waymarked routes into the surrounding countryside or simply savour a drink and a bite to eat at one of the cafés or The Swan, known locally as The Mucky Duck!

Busy working boats at Fradley Junction before World War II.



Fradley Junction has been transformed in recent years. After 150 years of constant boat traffic, the canal fell into disrepair in the mid-1900s when roads became the main highway for raw materials and goods. But the growth of leisure cruising since the 1960s has brought new life to Fradley and in 2004 British Waterways renovated the courtyard.

The carpenters' workshop is still in use but the chain store is now the Canalside Café and the blacksmith's forge houses new offices for British Waterways and local businesses.



From trade to leisure

Fradley Junction has been a busy community since the hamlet grew up in the late 1790s, at the point where the two canals meet. The canal companies built workshops, wharves and warehouses for the boats that carried coal, clay and other minerals as well as finished products from the Potteries and beer from Burton-on-Trent.

The place still looks much as it always has, with locks, bridges and attractive Georgian buildings made of mellow red brick. Today, the canal carries people rather than cargo, and Fradley Junction is a popular spot for local folk and visitors to relax and enjoy the special atmosphere of its living heritage.

The Swan by 1961.



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Three men of influence

Three of Britain's great 18th century entrepreneurs and engineers helped to create the Trent & Mersey and the Coventry Canals - the Duke of Bridgewater, Josiah Wedgwood and James Brindley. The Duke, often called the 'Canal Duke', was a major shareholder in the Trent & Mersey Canal. Wedgwood needed to get clay to his factory at Etruria in Stoke-on-Trent and send finished pottery away. Brindley was the imaginative engineer who made it all work! The Trent & Mersey Canal was completed in 1777, the Coventry Canal joined it in 1789.



Duke of Bridgewater.

A self-sufficient community

The Trent & Mersey Canal meets the Coventry Canal here at Fradley Junction. This attractive hamlet, with its red brick houses, canal workers' cottages, warehouses and a popular inn, dates from the late 1700s. The canals were newly built then and busy with boats carrying coal, flint, clay, beer and barley. The people who lived here kept the canals operating smoothly. Canal engineers and banksmen looked after the canal, blacksmiths and carpenters made and repaired lock gates and other equipment, a dry dock held boats under repair, and a shop and inn supplied the boatmen, canal workers and their families.

In 1851, Fradley Junction boasted a canal surveyor, a wharfinger, a blacksmith, a carpenter, a toll collector and a clerk as well as a shopkeeper and a porter. It was a compact community, vital to the operation of the canals.

Up the Junction

The best-known building here is The Swan, patronised by generations of working and leisure boaters. The inn, houses and cottages on Junction Row overlook the Trent & Mersey and face the Coventry Canal. The two imposing brick houses on the opposite bank, Wharf House and Watersmeet, are set back from the towpath and sheltered by trees. The Trent & Mersey's engineer lived in Watersmeet, and the engineer for the Coventry Canal lived in Wharf House. The dry dock, beside the Coventry Canal near the junction, is still repairing narrowboats, as it has for over 200 years.

Billowing smoke

If you could step back in time and visit the courtyard in the 1800s you'd find a hot and noisy place. In the late 1700s this working yard was full of billowing smoke and the smell of hot metal mixed with sounds of sawing and hammering as the blacksmith and carpenters made and mended lock gates and other canal equipment.

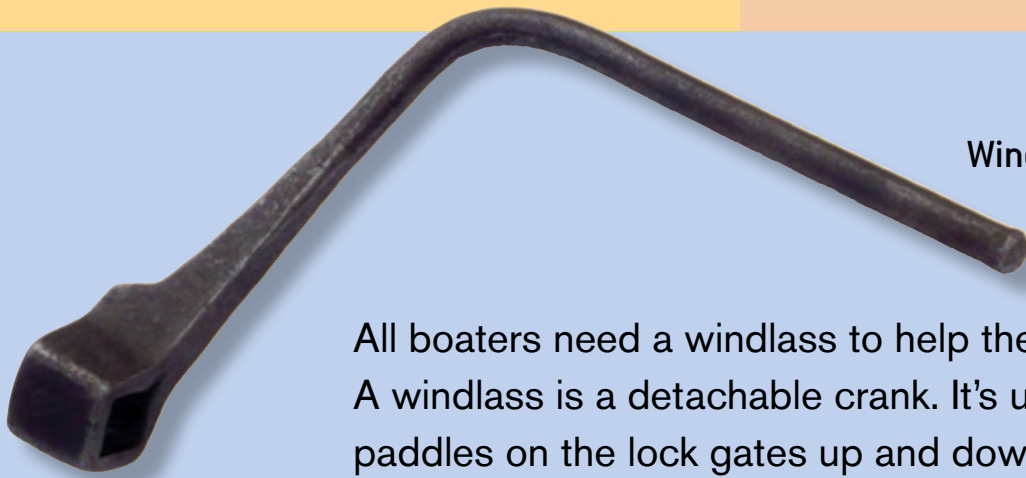
The courtyard still rings with sound today, but it's the chatter and clatter of visitors as they enjoy the atmosphere of the canal.



Did you know?

A wharfinger was the person in charge of a wharf, overseeing the cargo that was loaded and unloaded. In 1836 Fradley Junction's wharfinger was a woman called Mrs Lucas.

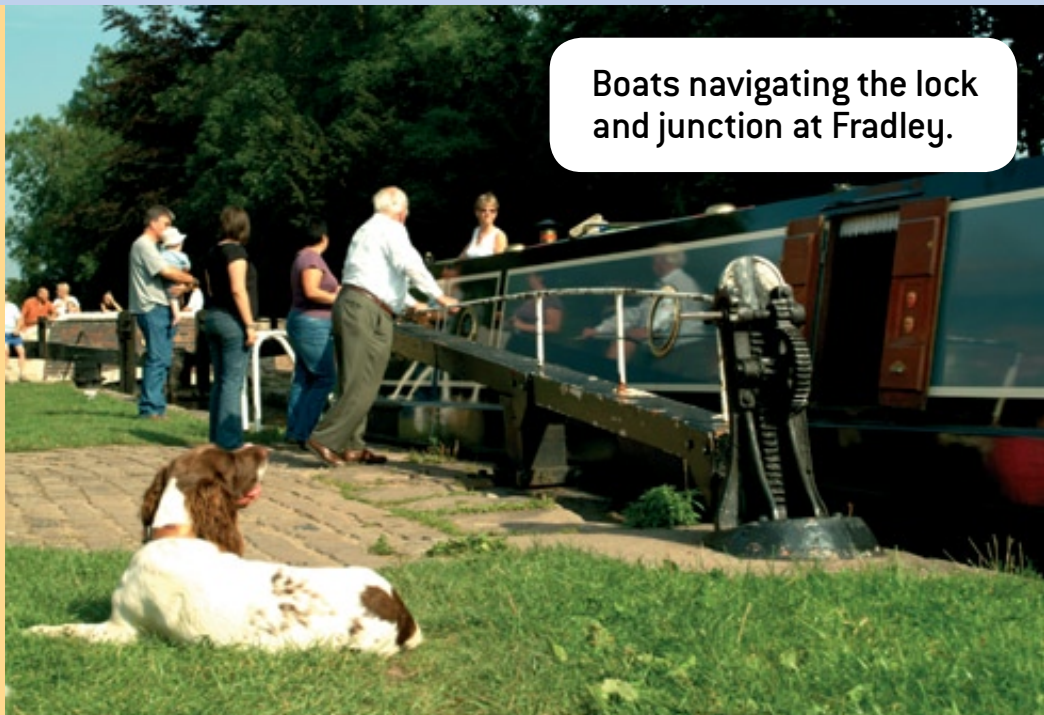
Boaters often used to change horses at Fradley Junction. They left their tired horse in the stables to rest overnight, taking on a fresh horse. They'd collect their horse on their return journey through the junction.



Windlass

All boaters need a windlass to help them go through locks. A windlass is a detachable crank. It's used to wind the paddles on the lock gates up and down.

There are five locks at Fradley Junction, raising boats 10m along a half mile stretch of the Trent & Mersey. Expert boaters can go through the locks in 75 minutes, but it can take over three hours, depending on traffic.

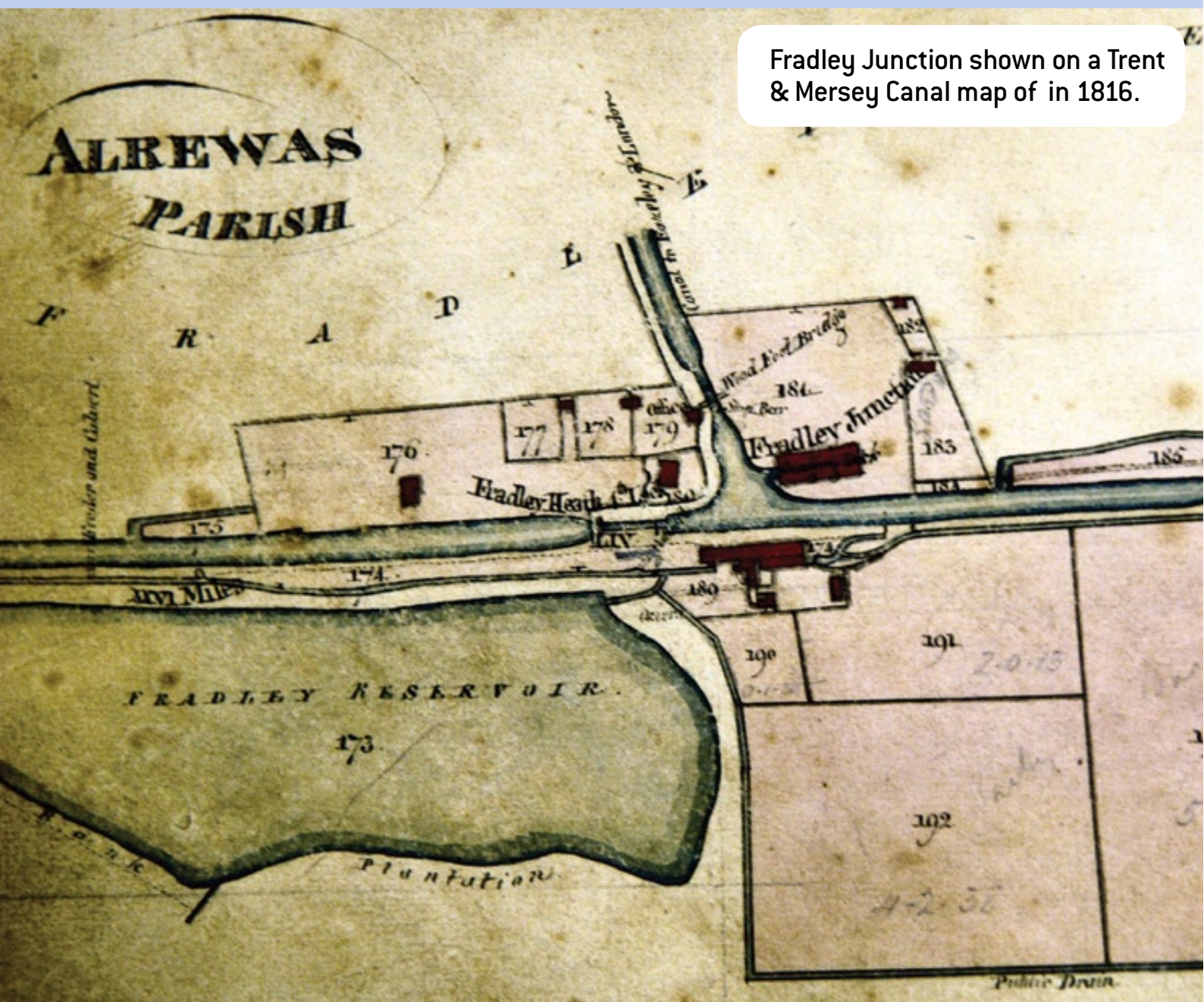


Boats navigating the lock and junction at Fradley.

Jack Keen was born at Fradley Junction. His father was the lengthsman and water bailiff for the canal. He remembers that *"I'd always got a dog or a ferret with me from the age of 7 or 8."*

Water tight

Fradley Pool was created as a reservoir for the Trent & Mersey Canal Company. Constant water supplies are essential for canals and the Trent & Mersey Canal Company didn't want to lose any to their rivals, the Coventry Canal Company. So they built an ingenious overflow weir and channel which carried the main flow of water from above Middle Lock, around the Junction, under The Swan and behind the cottages at Junction Row, to Fradley Pool, where it was stored. When water was needed for their canal, they released it into the canal near Keeper's Lock. The scheme still works and you can see and hear the weir and overflow channel beside the towpath at Middle Lock.



Elegant birds and elusive insects

Fradley Pool is full of surprises! You'll find a silver heron, animals carved into tree stumps and a thatched bird hide. A boardwalk takes you over the water for unexpected views across the pool. Two platforms are ideal spots to pond-dip for small insects and fish. There are fishing platforms too and you can get day tickets during the season from the café at Kingfisher Holiday Park near The Swan inn.

The bird hide is a great place to watch the wildlife of Fradley Pool.



A world apart

Trees around Fradley Pool have created a peaceful atmosphere that contrasts with the bustle of the Junction. You'll see lots of water birds and you can often watch coots and moorhens searching for food - but kingfishers and great crested grebes are the most spectacular visitors. If you hear the laughing call of a green

woodpecker you might then see a bright flash of green and red as it flies off with its strange bouncing flight. At dusk and dawn, bats fly low over the water, hunting for insects. This pool is so good for wildlife that it's now a nature reserve and a site of biological importance.

A working yard

Skilled craftsmen made and repaired lock gates, stop planks and measuring chains at the yard for almost 200 years. The plan of Fradley Junction from 1816 (see page 6) shows a similar layout of buildings as today, with the working yard, canal worker's cottages, the warehouse and the dry dock.

This photograph from 1963 shows the yard with the buildings storing equipment for the canal and a working crane. The chain store, on the left of the photo, has now become the canalside café. The yard, once a busy workplace, has now become a relaxing place to enjoy the canal.



The maintenance wharf in 1963, before the canals' revival for leisure boating.

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During the 1950s, when the canal still carried commercial traffic, major repairs to locks were made at Bank Holidays as the working boats were moored up over these long weekends.

Canal carpenters and blacksmiths

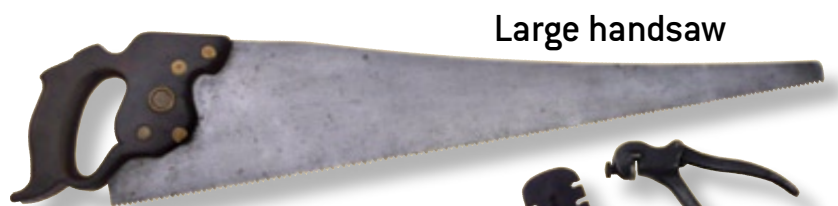
Carpenters and blacksmiths worked together at the Fradley yard for over 200 years, building and repairing lock gates, equipment and canal buildings. During the mid 1900s Ernest Waterhouse was the canal carpenter and Jim Bailey was the blacksmith. They worked closely together, making the lock gates and other items in their workshops and then fitting them on site at the canal. Their working hours were long, starting at 7.30 in the morning and finishing at 6.00pm.

Chris Bailey works for British Waterways. He recalls his first days as an apprentice carpenter at Fradley Yard *"I used to love to work in the carpenter's shop in the summer - nice and cool - and in the blacksmith's shop in the winter because that kept us nice and warm!"*

Tools from the carpenter's workshop. Everything was done by hand. It was muscle power not power tools.



Ernest's tape measure was as long as a canal lock. It is marked in feet on one side and chains on the other.



Large handsaw

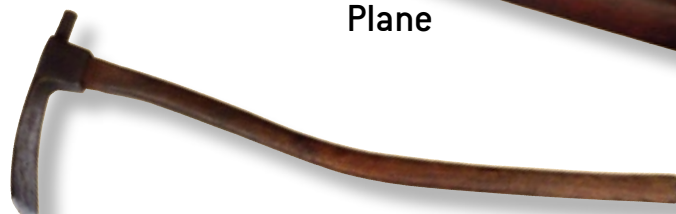
How do you think these tools were used?



Plane



This huge chisel was used to shape timber on the lock gates.



The Adze was swung between the legs and used to roughly shape timber.

The crane beside the canal at British Waterway's yard is not the original crane. It came from Burton upon Trent and was installed by the Trent & Mersey Canal Society in 1980.

Walking on Water

At Fradley Pool Nature Reserve you can walk out over the surface of the water and through the tall reed beds on a special boardwalk which gives you an amazing close-up view of this secret, watery world.



Keen fishermen

Bill Keen was a lengthsman and water bailiff for the Trent & Mersey Canal for 41 years. He looked after a 3 mile length of canal, cutting the grass and laying hedges. He was in charge of the fish stocks for this section of the canal and used to 'peg out' for fishing matches. On busy Sundays he often pegged out three different fishing matches.



Jack Keen

Walking in circles

You can discover the villages and countryside around Fradley on four circular walks from the Junction. They follow the canal towpaths and rights of way and take between one and three hours at a leisurely pace. Look out for the Fradley Walks leaflet available locally or online.

The boardwalk and the pond dipping platforms at Fradley Pool are made from recycled plastic bottles. It's ideal because they don't need painting, they won't rot and it's a great way of re-using plastic!

High and dry

The canal companies built the dry dock at the same time as the canals and they used it to repair their boats. Today it's still in use, continuing the tradition of repairing boats on the two canals. The modern swing bridge over the Coventry Canal gives access to the dry dock and the private houses.



Ice-breakers

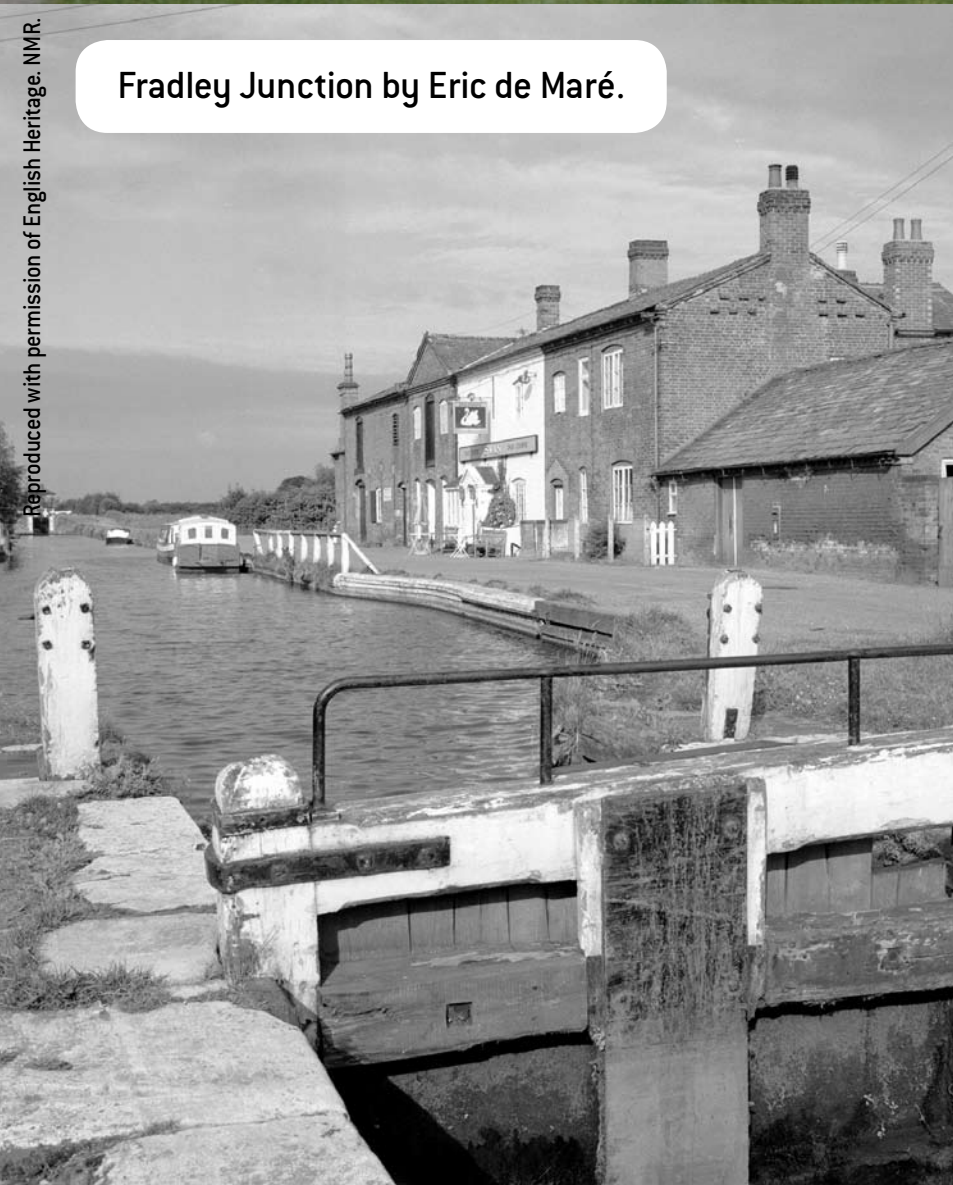
In the days when the canals carried commercial loads, iceboats were used to break the ice when the canal froze over. A gang of men stood in the iceboat holding onto the central rail and rocked the boat forcefully so it smashed its way through the ice. It was an exhausting job.

You can see the remains of the toll house for the Coventry Canal near the swing bridge. It's now a private garage but if you look closely at the brickwork you'll see the shape of the original building. Boaters also remember it as a chapel in the past.

Fradley Junction by Harry Arnold.



Fradley Junction by Eric de Maré.



In the picture

Fradley Junction has been popular with photographers for almost a century. Eric de Maré, an influential architectural photographer, was passionately interested in canals and recorded many of them in the 1950s. Harry Arnold, a well known canal author and photographer has taken similar images since the 1960s. The tradition continues as boaters, visitors and residents capture the special atmosphere of Fradley Junction.

Fradley Junction is where the Trent & Mersey and Coventry Canals meet.



Alrewas
2km/1½miles

North

0 100 metres

Fradley
1.5km/1mile

Handsacre
5km/3miles

Key

- Nature Reserve Entrance
- Car Park
- Disabled Parking
- Toilets (wheelchair accessible)
- Information Centre
- Audio Posts



Find out more...

Six **audio posts** tell you more about the history of Fradley Junction.

Families, schools and organised groups can borrow **Discovery Boxes** to use at Fradley Junction. Visit **www.wow4water.net** to find out more as well as games, learning and fun things to do.

Drinks and refreshments:

The Swan.

Tel: 01283 790330. E-mail: info@theswanatfradley.co.uk

Canalside Café. Tel: 01283 792508

Kingfisher Café and Holiday Park.

Tel: 01283 790407. www.kingfisherholidaypark.com

Fradley Junction, Alrewas, Burton upon Trent, DE13 7DN.

Contact the waterway office on 01827 252000.

National Customer Service

Tel: 0845 6715530. E-mail: enquiries.centralshires@britishwaterways.co.uk

Visit **www.waterscape.com** to find out more about British Waterways and canals.

Always remember to stay **SAFE** near water
- **Stay Away From the Edge**



Cover photo by Harry Arnold

British Waterways would like to thank all the organizations and individuals that have helped with this leaflet especially: The Waterways Trust, Harry Arnold, English Heritage, Geoff Williamson, Audrey Sutton, Lena Jackson, Sheila Ross, Don Waterhouse, Jack Keen and all the people who came to the Reminiscence Day. This leaflet was written and designed by Red Kite Environment and Anglezarke Dixon Associates.

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